

REMARKS

Claims 1-6, 9-17, 19-21, and 23-31 remain pending. Independent Claims 1 and 20 are similar.

The previous amendments to the claims overcame the previous rejection based on the combination of Webb and Visocnik. In the final office action, the examiner rejected at least independent Claims 1 and 20 as being obvious over Webb (US 2002/0160828) in view of Visocnik (US 2004/0048646) and the newly cited Cregan (US 2005/0054422) and Baerlocher (US 6,561,900).

The Claims 1 and 20 have been clarified to make clear that the special symbol itself in the first array and second array is combinable with the randomly selected symbols across the reels to grant an award. This expressly precludes the claimed special symbols being Webb's "markers" 110 (explained below), which are not combinable with symbols on the reels for granting an award. Claims 1 and 20 have also been amended to recite that the second array of symbols is randomly selected independently of the first array of symbols. This also expressly excludes Webb's markers 110 being the claimed special symbols, since Webb's markers are not randomly selected independently of the symbols on the reels. The amendments are supported on page 4, lines 24-29; Fig. 4; page 5, lines 1-30; and page 6, lines 14-16.

In Claims 1 and 20, first and second arrays of independently selected random symbols on first and second sets of virtual reels are concurrently displayed on separate screens. At least one special symbol appearing in a first array of symbols on the first set of virtual reels is shifted to a position in a second array of symbols on the second set of virtual reels, on the different display screen. Awards are granted for symbol combinations displayed on the first set of virtual reels, where the combinations include combinations with the special symbol, and awards are granted for symbol combinations displayed on the second set of virtual reels, where the combinations include combinations with the special symbol.

Playing two similar games concurrently has various advantages, such as using the same paytable for both games, ease of understanding, consistent theme, consistent functions of symbols, etc.

Webb describes various games where a set of reels displays symbols (S symbols 108 in Fig. 6) and markers (markers 110 in Fig. 6) next to some of the symbols. Associated with each reel is a game board (bingo board 102 in Fig. 6) or other secondary game that is played using the markers that are displayed on the single reel directly above the secondary game. Playing a secondary game in steps (using multiple spins) is the most discussed embodiment in Webb. At the bottom of paragraph 0040, however, Webb mentions that:

It should be appreciated that the game scheme of the present invention can include secondary games 102 which would not require steps and secondary games 102 which do require steps. For example, a secondary game could be a type of symbol generator in and of itself.

On page 8 of the final office action, the examiner places significance on Webb's paragraph 0040 ("a secondary game could be a type of symbol generator in and of itself"), but it is respectfully submitted that the examiner is using hindsight in creating a game that Webb never envisioned (and certainly has not enabled). In the vague example Webb gives that "a secondary game could be a type of symbol generator in and of itself," Webb is contrasting such a game with the various other games described by Webb where markers on reels in the primary game are used to play a secondary game in incremental steps. Webb's example of "a secondary game [that] could be a type of symbol generator in and of itself" could not suggest any secondary game where special symbols in a first array on a first set of reels are somehow shifted to a second array of symbols on a second set of reels. So such language does not suggest Claims 1 or 20.

Further, in contrast to Claims 1 and 20, Webb's markers 110 are not symbols that can be used in combinations with symbols 108 on the first set of reels to grant awards. The markers 110 have no function in the first set of virtual reels. Further, Webb's markers 110 shifted to a board or other secondary game are not generated independently of the symbols in the first array, in contrast to Claims 1 and 20.

The examiner cites **Visocnik** for disclosing a special symbol (a wild symbol) that shifts randomly or in a predetermined pattern over a single array of symbols and is combinable with the other symbols in the array. Visocnik discloses a moving wild symbol (e.g., a mouse) that moves around the same screen for each game in a free game session. The mouse does not shift between separate concurrently displayed games, since there is only one game displayed at a time.

The combination of Webb and Visocnik could not suggest Claims 1 and 20 since there is no suggestion of shifting one or more of the combinable symbols in a first array on a first screen to a second array on a second screen displaying independently generated combinable symbols.

Cregan was only cited to show a gaming machine with multiple screens; however, even if Applicant's two sets of virtual reels were displayed on a single screen, the combination of the prior art would not suggest it.

Baerlocher, like Visocnik, describes a reel-type game where symbols move to different reel positions in the same set of reels. This could not suggest shifting symbols between two separate reel-type games displayed on two separate screens.

It is respectfully submitted that the addition of Cregan and Baerlocher to the previously combination of Webb and Visconik do not make independent Claims 1 and 20 obvious. Accordingly, since all other claims are dependent on Claim 1 or 20, all claims are respectfully submitted to be allowable.

If the examiner has any questions or would like further clarification of the claims, the examiner is requested to call Applicant's attorney at 408-382-0480 x202.

Certificate of Electronic Transmission
I hereby certify that this correspondence is being submitted electronically to the United States Patent and Trademark Office using EFS-Web on the date shown below.

/Brian D Ogonowsky/
Attorney for Applicant(s)

August 26, 2009
Date of Signature

Respectfully submitted,
/Brian D Ogonowsky/
Brian D. Ogonowsky
Attorney for Applicant(s)
Reg. No. 31,988

Patent Law Group LLP
2635 N. First St.
Suite 223
San Jose, CA 95134
Tel (408) 382-0480 x202
Fax (408) 382-0481